



**COAST GUARD
MARINE SAFETY OFFICE
JACKSONVILLE**



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MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN 21-03

June 23, 2003

SAFETY ALERT - WEARING OF LIFE JACKETS

On Saturday morning, June 14, 2003 at approximately 0715 local time, the Coast Guard Inspected Small Passenger Vessel, the M/V TAKI-TOOO proceeded across the bar at Tillamook Bay, Oregon carrying 17 passengers and two crew. During the bar crossing, a large wave struck the port side of the TAKI-TOOO, capsizing the vessel. Nine people, including the master, are known dead and two are missing. The preliminary findings indicate that **none of the nine dead wore life jackets**. Six of the eight survivors wore/or held onto a life jacket.

In 1996, the Coast Guard specifically included amendments to the Small Passenger Vessel regulations that addressed the wearing of life jackets, aimed at incidents such as this, to reduce deaths when people enter the water. The Coast Guard considered previous capsizings similar to the TAKI-TOOO accident when implementing these regulations. The previous capsizing incidents include the [MERRY JANE](#), the [SAN MATEO](#) and [other casualties](#) where vessels capsized, or nearly capsized, during transits through bars or inlets with dangerous swells or breaking waves resulting in people thrown into or entering the water. These casualty reports may be found at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/moa/capsinkcas.htm>.

This safety alert reiterates the duty of masters of small passenger vessels during potentially hazardous conditions. Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 185, requires that the master of a vessel shall require passengers to don life jackets when possible hazardous conditions exist including but not limited to:

1. When transiting hazardous bars or inlets
2. During severe weather
3. In the event of flooding, fire, or other events that may possibly call for evacuation; and
4. When the vessel is being towed, except a non-self-propelled vessel under normal operating conditions.

Donning life jackets when possibly hazardous conditions exist may make passengers apprehensive, but this precaution can easily be explained as similar to wearing seatbelts during aircraft take-offs and landings and periods of turbulence. The wearing of life jackets is an added safety measure required for passenger protection. The best time to don a life jacket is before it is needed - before people are in the water.

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The Coast Guard has entrusted small passenger vessel masters to use their judgment to determine when to require the passengers to wear life jackets. Should Masters have questions concerning “hazardous conditions” and when life jackets should be donned, they should contact their local Coast Guard Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection for additional guidance. If there is doubt as to whether a hazardous condition exists, passengers and crew should don life jackets.

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